

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR A SAFER, STRONGER COMMUNITY

By Mayor Gene Winstead

EMERGENCIES CAN HAPPEN ANYTIME, anywhere and without warning. Local public safety officials, including Police, Fire, Emergency Medical, Public Health and Public Works, have always maintained an emergency response plan in the event of a disaster.

A look at the history of emergencies in our community shows high winds, tornadoes, floods and hazardous chemical spills as the most likely risks. But after the terrorist attacks of September 11, federal and local governments developed and implemented action plans for a different type of disaster. The City continues to improve its response to all emergencies by increasing communications, training staff and strengthening partnerships.

Effective communications is critical to emergency response. The lack of communications between New York police and fire personnel at the World Trade Center disaster was a tragic lesson. In fall 2005, the City of Bloomington will roll out an enhanced radio system that will allow shared communications between all metropolitan cities and agencies in the event of an emergency. Much of the funding for the radio system and other programs, training and equipment is from federal agencies including Homeland Security and the Centers for Disease Control. The Bloomington Fire Department was one of 15 cities in the state to receive a decontamination trailer to use in the event of a chemical incident.

The Fire Department has been very active in Homeland Security initiatives. In response to terrorism, firefighters have undergone extensive training that included exercises to better respond to a

potential airport or light-rail tunnel emergency. They have also executed an automatic, mutual-aid emergency response with neighboring cities.

Through training and an enhanced communications network, Public Health has expanded and strengthened its ability to detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks and potential bioterrorism incidents. They have joined forces with other state and local public health agencies, law enforcement and community partners to enhance the Health Alert Network's round-the-clock fax and e-mail information exchange, offer a monthly public health advisory television series in six different languages, and recruit trained volunteers who could assist in the event of a public health crisis or natural disaster.

"Emergency preparedness is about building relationships," said Public Health Administrator Karen Zeleznak. "We've always worked closely with other agencies, but we are expanding our partnerships to help us better respond to emergencies."

Police Commander James Ryan said Bloomington Police and Fire are working with the community to conduct drills and scenarios to make sure people know what to do in an emergency.

"We continue to partner with businesses and schools to make sure they are well-prepared," said Commander Ryan. "And we are committed to ensuring the safety of our citizens."

Residents ask me as Mayor what they can do to prepare for an emergency. Get to know your neighbors, their kids and pets, and find out what kind of help

they might need in a disaster. I encourage everyone to become involved with their Neighborhood Watch program. The more you know the better prepared you and your family will be.

For information, visit the City's Web site at www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Emergency or Public Health.

RESOURCES

The following is a list of resources to help keep you informed and prepared for an emergency.

Neighborhood Watch - Bloomington Police and residents working together for a safer community. Call Proactive Police Services Unit at 952-563-8808.

Emergency and Community Health Outreach (ECHO) - A public television program broadcasting emergency and health information in six languages. Visit www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keyword: ECHO, or call 952-563-8995.

Medical Reserve Corps of Hennepin County - Recruiting trained health volunteers in the event of an emergency. Visit www.mrc-hennepin.org or call 952-351-5234.

Minnesota Department of Health - For information on preparedness and response for health emergencies, visit www.health.state.mn.us.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security - Learn more about citizen preparedness at www.ready.gov.

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Elected officials presented for informational purposes.

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A HEALTHY BLOOMINGTON

BLOOMINGTON WORKPLACES NOW SMOKE FREE ORDINANCE EFFECTIVE MARCH 31

ALL BLOOMINGTON WORKPLACES ARE now smoke free. Phase two of the smoking ban took effect on March 31 and includes establishments with on-sale liquor, wine or 3.2 beer licenses or permits, or charitable gambling licenses or permits. The ordinance prohibits smoking in indoor public places and workplaces and within 25 feet of entrances, exits, open windows and ventilation intakes to public places and

workplaces. It also requires that at least one-half of the seating capacity of outdoor restaurant patios be designated as non-smoking areas.

Smoking in private residences, motor vehicles, designated hotel-motel sleeping rooms, and during Indian spiritual rituals or cultural ceremonies is allowed under state law and is not affected by the City's ordinance.



This sign and others may be downloaded at www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Smoke free sign.

For more information, visit www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Health home, or call 952-563-8934.